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Dear Chair Rice,

I tried so hard to attend the hearing on Friday, however the weather was so bad, and my daughter became so frightened for me to continue. I had a great speech prepared, however now it is in your hands. If you have any questions about this bill, please let me know and I will explain how important this bill is to children in Montana.

My wife and I have been in foster care for over 10 years and have united many children back with their parents, however there are some parents that just seem to use the system, doing enough to make judges think they are trying, however never enough of their parenting plan to actually get their children back.

I know that the department of family services does not make the family plans so difficult that a person can not complete them, in fact I know that they will go over and beyond to assist every parent that wants to complete a plan.

The main focus of my prepared speech is this.... in child development hours
= days

days = weeks

weeks = months

months = years.

So while a parent does not complete their plan within 18 months may sound like a short period of time to some, for a child, it can seem like a life time..... 18 years! It is time to place the concerns, needs, and welfare as a priority and that is what this bill does.

The only thing that would make this bill better would be for it to make the wording state that the state must terminate rights rather than request termination, thus taking the stress away from judges and making it clear to parent that if they want their children back, time is of the essence.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill, and I would also like to take this moment to thank Representative Dennis Himmelberger for sponsoring this bill for me and for the foster children of Montana.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Denis & Paula Pitman
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